

## Freeze Destroys Strawberries and Other Crops Fact Sheet

**Event date:** January 23 – 25, 2003



**Figure 1.** A man checks his oranges to see if the ice covering has protected them over night.

**Summary of event:** On January 23, a strong cold front ushered in cold temperatures and gusty northwest winds into the Florida peninsula, which created some of the coldest weather in several years. Wind chill temperatures ranged from 10 to 15 in Bronson, around 20 in Tampa and Lakeland, to 20 to 25 degrees in Fort Myers. Overnight low temperatures ranged from near 20 in the northern counties to the upper 20s in the inland counties and southward, and to the lower 30s along the coast near Fort Myers. A hard freeze (temperatures of 27 degrees or less for three or more hours) reached south into northeast Hillsborough and northern Polk counties. Citrus crops fared well because the freeze did not last long enough but strawberries took a \$4.5 million loss and tropical fish a \$4 million loss.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, arctic high pressure settled over the southeastern United States which maintained the clear and cold weather across the Florida peninsula. Overnight lows of 19 to 24 occurred from Bronson to Brooksville with temperatures in the 30s farther south. Northeast winds

of 10 to 15 mph produced wind chills down to 25 degrees from Tampa to Lakeland to Fort Myers. Citrus crops fared well during the freeze but strawberries took an estimated \$4.5 million dollar loss and tropical fish an estimated \$4 million dollar loss.



**Figure 2:** (Top) A man waters strawberry plants to form a protective ice covering. (Bottom) Oranges display this ice covering.

**Links for more information:**

<http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2009-01-22-florida-freeze N.htm>.

**Acknowledgements:** The National Climatic Data Center.